

## THE USE OF AFFIRMATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

By Bob Young

### **PREFACE: The Bible is our Renewal Handbook**

Many Christians use certain times of year to renew spiritual focus or to remember God's blessings. The number of "forty day" plans available has multiplied in recent years. Some plans focus on resolutions for the New Year. Others focus on Lent and the days leading up to the Easter season. Yet other plans focus on the end of the year and the holiday season around Thanksgiving and Christmas. For example, one plan uses November as "30 Days of Thanksgiving," another suggests 40 days of Thanksgiving beginning in mid-October and concluding on Thanksgiving Day, another counts 40 days of Thanksgiving beginning just after mid-November and concluding on December 31.

It is vital that we Christians continually renew our minds with the eternal value system of God's Word. Life is seen through a different lens when each day we focus afresh on God and how he makes a difference in the important issues of who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. A daily focus on spiritual things reminds us every day of God and his role in the world and in our lives. One way to experience daily renewal is to focus every day on an affirmation from God's Word. **The Bible truly is our "Renewal Handbook."**

Reading (or recalling) a daily Biblical affirmation and using it in a morning or evening prayer does not require much time, and such affirmations can help you develop the habit of "renewal through meditation," a habit that will bring spiritual growth and constant renewal.

### **INTRODUCTION: The Importance of Spiritual Renewal**

*"Don't be like the world, but be transformed by constantly renewing your mind and thinking. In this way, you will know the will of God and understand how good, complete, and pleasing it is." (Rom. 12:2).*

Every day, the temporal value system and the "advertising" of the world bombards us through the things we see, hear, and read. It enters our minds through television, radio, email, websites, daily conversations, and observing what it takes to get ahead in this world. Many of the messages we receive are intentional—encouraging us to adopt the values and behaviors of this temporary contemporary world. Most of the messages are subtle—no 'in your face' demands that you line up with the values of the world—just the message that you will be missing something in your life if you do not buy into the world's ways.

Because of these non-stop attempts to get into our wallets and our lives—efforts which take our attention off what really matters, it is vital that we renew our minds with the eternal value system of God's Word. Each day we must refocus on God and his part in the important issues of who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. A helpful habit is to use daily affirmations from God's Word. Again we note: the Bible is our "Renewal Handbook."

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER, AND ITS USE WITH AFFIRMATIONS

...The Behinder You Get. My mother often encouraged my sister and I to slow and think about what we most needed to do with these words: "The harder you go, the behinder you get." It is true. When we flail aimlessly or act without the end in mind, it doesn't matter how hard we work, we often make little progress. So we conclude that we need to think in advance about what we want to accomplish and how we will do.

In the spiritual realm, prayer is an important part of determining what we should do. Many Christians get further and further behind in their spiritual lives because we are too busy to pray. We are too busy to pray because we misunderstand the nature of prayer. We see prayer as one more activity to work into our busy schedules. Or perhaps we see prayer as a way out of emergencies, thinking that when we cry, God has to bail us out. In the routines of daily life that burn time and churn up problems, we seldom pray. So we find ourselves "behinder and behinder."

Prayer is part of the Christian's planning process. Prayer focuses our priorities. Reuel Lemmons is often quoted: "I only get done what I pray about." More recently, Bill Hybels has written a book with the challenging title, *Too Busy Not to Pray*. Jesus demonstrated the priority of prayer as his way of maintaining contact with the will of his Father. Indeed, prayer is the first step in accomplishing all that God desires to do through us.

Let me suggest five things prayer will bring to your life.

- Prayer will help you establish **priorities**. Since you can't do everything, you must do what really matters. And in doing what really matters, the Christian focuses on what really matters to God. Prayer helps me decide what I will do.
- Prayer will help you touch **people**. Since you can't serve everyone, you must minister to those God puts in your path. When God leads you to people, can you see them? When God opens doors of relationship, do you walk through them?
- Prayer will help you know God's **presence**. Distinguishing the important things is helped by a sense of God's presence.
- Prayer will help you know God's **power**. When I am overly-busy, I need help to get done even the most important things. The busier I am, the more important is prayer as a source of God's power in my life.
- Prayer will help you know God's **passion**. Even in the midst of our busyness, prayer helps us see God's purpose and plan. Prayer injects my life with God's passion—compassion and caring.

The lesson is that we must pray about what we do before we do it. Too often, our prayers to God are that he might bless what we have already done. For the Christian serious about understanding and doing God's will, prayer is first. Don't make it the last thing you do as you deal with challenges of life.

***As we seek to establish effective spiritual habits, may God bless our every effort to walk each day more closely with Him.***

## WHAT IS AN AFFIRMATION

Affirmation—what are we talking about? The use of affirmation is a concept familiar to many Christians. Because the word is applied in various ways, let's begin by defining what we mean. Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* was an early effort focused on the value of **mental affirmations**. Such affirmations often deal with positive thinking, self-worth, self-confidence, and dealing the negative messages of life, and are popular outside of Christianity. Mental affirmations can be valuable, but they are not our focus here. A second meaning of the word is reflected in the use of **relational or social affirmations** with reference to how we support and encourage others. When we make a practice of affirming others when we interact with them, we bless them but that is not the kind of affirmation we are addressing here. Third, some self-help and self-development websites refer to **spiritual affirmations** that encourage spiritual growth and take one nearer to one's 'god.' Such affirmations are not necessarily biblically based and generally assume that one is responsible for one's own spirituality. While we are seeking a stronger spiritual life, our goal is different. The Christian is empowered, grows, and is renewed through the use of **biblical affirmations**. Positive scriptural truths not only encourage us, they also provide orientation in a midst of a disorienting life. Our goal is to learn how to think spiritually with Christian affirmations. Paul urged the Roman Christians to separation from the world and transformed living through renewed thinking (Romans 12:1-2). Thus, reading and understanding the will of God revealed in the Bible becomes our Renewal Handbook.

## FINDING AND DEVELOPING AFFIRMATIONS

Many kinds of affirmations are found in Scripture. A quick survey of the Bible reveals affirmations about (1) God's attributes and nature, (2) God's works and word, (3) the identity of God's people, (4) the value of relationship with God, (5) the rewards of character development, and (6) the beauty of relationship with others. You can easily find other categories of biblical affirmations. I encourage you, as you read the word of God, to identify a daily (or weekly) affirmation, memorize it, and meditate on it as part of your daily walk with God. It is rewarding to develop a series of affirmations to provide a weekly focus for life. This will help you develop the "affirmation habit."

Developing your own affirmations is easier than it may seem, although for many people it involves reading the Bible through fresh eyes: "What does this text say to me? How can I apply it today? How should this change my life?" I like to develop my affirmations for the week (often thematically linked), and have them available on something I use every day—bathroom mirror, calendar, planner, computer, phone, etc. Some like to think of the affirmation several times during the day, others like to use them in prayer and meditation. My preference is to use a different affirmation every day, although some people use the same affirmation every day for a week, using it in prayer and meditating on it thoroughly. Regardless of how you use affirmations in your daily walk with God, you will be blessed by developing the "affirmation habit."

## **SPIRITUAL RENEWAL: How to Use Daily Biblical Affirmations for Spiritual Growth**

The goal is to understand the process of using biblical affirmations and to develop the “affirmation habit.” Using daily scriptural affirmations for spiritual renewal and faith building is not complicated. Each day, we use a scriptural truth to provide orientation for our thinking and to guide our lives, our prayers, and our thoughts. We seek to firmly plant a Bible verse in our minds as a future resource.

Developing the “affirmation habit” will help us find continuing spiritual strength and daily renewal through meditation on God’s Word. May God bless you in your desire to put him first and to meditate on his word day and night!

### **SAMPLES OF BIBLICAL AFFIRMATIONS**

This section gives suggested affirmations that will help you develop the “affirmation habit.” After using the guiding affirmations below, you will be ready to develop your own affirmations and use them in your daily walk with God.

#### **Group One**

##### **Attributes of God: What God is Like (New Testament)**

- **Sunday:** God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)
- **Monday:** God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)
- **Tuesday:** God (is) the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (1 Tim. 6:15)
- **Wednesday:** ...[God] who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. (1 Tim. 6:16)
- **Thursday:** God is spirit, and his worshipers worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)
- **Friday:** And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- **Saturday:** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Cor. 9:8)

#### **Group Two**

##### **God’s Mighty Works (Psalm 136)**

- **Sunday.** Creation.  
*By his understanding he made the heavens, spread out the earth upon the waters, made the great lights—the sun to govern the day, the moon and stars to govern the night. (136:5-9)*
- **Monday.** Deliverance.  
*He struck down the firstborn of Egypt and brought Israel out from among them with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; he divided the Red Sea asunder and brought Israel through the midst of it. (136:10-14)*
- **Tuesday.** Exodus.  
*He swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea; he led his people through the desert, struck down great king, killed mighty kings—Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan. (136:15-20)*

- **Wednesday.** Promised Land.  
*He gave their land as an inheritance, an inheritance to his servant Israel. (136:21-22).*
- **Thursday.** Freedom.  
*He remembered us in our low estate and freed us from our enemies. (136:23-24)*
- **Friday.** Provision.  
*He gives food to every creature. (136:25)*
- **Saturday.** Thanksgiving.  
*Give thanks to the God of heaven. (136:26)*

### Group Three

#### Affirming our Place in God's Plan (2 Timothy 2)

- **Sunday.** We are children—sons and daughters. We are children of God; we are spiritual children of those who have trained us in the faith. We seek to be strong in God's grace, capable of training others who will train others. (2:1-2)
- **Monday.** We are like soldiers. Soldiers often endure hardship. Soldiers are single-minded and focused on their task; they are not easily distracted. They serve their commander loyally. (2:3-4)
- **Tuesday.** We are like athletes. We are in a competition and honor and obey the rules. (2:5)
- **Wednesday.** We are like farmers. Our job is to work in the harvest. We are sowers and reapers. We can expect to receive a reward from that which we produce. (2:6)
- **Thursday.** We are workers. As workers, we are hired. We seek the approval of God who oversees our work. We seek to be diligent workers; we want to be skilled workers. (2:15)
- **Friday.** We are vessels or instruments. Not every vessel is noble, but we can be noble instruments for God through the pure lives we live. God's purpose for us is noble. When we place ourselves in his hands, we are useful in very good work. (2:20-21)
- **Saturday.** We are servants. As servants, we live a certain kind of life and develop certain kinds of skills. It is not enough merely to commit ourselves to serving. We are called to peaceful living, kindness, skilled teaching, and gentleness. We serve because we genuinely care for others. (2:24-26).

### Group Four

#### People of Character are Blessed by God (Psalms)

[Note: The first three groups had seven samples of affirmations. This group has twenty "blessing" passages from the Psalms. These could be used during 10 days with two affirmations for each day, or during 20 days. These are affirmations of blessing upon those who seek to walk in God's ways.]

- Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (1:1-2)
- Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (2:12b)

- Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (32:1-2)
- Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! (33:12)
- Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! (34:8)
- Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! (40:4)
- Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. (41:1-2)
- Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple! (65:4)
- Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you! (84:4,5,12)
- Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face, who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted. (89:15-16)
- Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law.... (94:12)
- Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times! (106:3)
- Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! (112:1)
- You, who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us.... (115:11-12a)
- Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! (119:1-3)
- Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them [children]! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (127:5)
- Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! (128:1)
- Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD. (128:4)
- Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD! (144:15)
- Blessed is he, whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God.... (146:5)

### **CONTINUING TO USE BIBLICAL AFFIRMATIONS**

I hope you have enjoyed the affirmations I have shared. As I conclude, I want to share some words of encouragement with you and give you some ideas about how you can incorporate

biblical affirmations for spiritual growth and renewal into each day of your life. I encourage to develop your own affirmations and to use them in your daily walk with God.

For many, the greatest challenge in the use of biblical affirmations is finding the affirmation passages. There are several methods that one can use to identifying biblical affirmations.

- Some people like to identify random verses and use them for meditation and prayer. This can be done with favorite verses or with random Bible reading.
- Others like to identify a theme and then find related verses. We used this approach when we considered the nature of God in the New Testament. A concordance or topical index can be helpful in identifying verses related to a specific theme.
- A third method is to use a specific theme as the filter for a certain section of Scripture. This method is reflected in the affirmations we shared from Psalm 136 about God's creative works. Each day we identified a factor or result described in a section of the psalm. The affirmations from 2 Timothy 2 focused on the various identifications of the Christian that appear in the chapter. The blessing passages from the Psalms where blessings are pronounced for human beings were identified with a concordance, noting the passages related to human creation.
- Fourth, a very personal method involves reading a section of Scripture until one finds a verse with special meaning or application in one's life at that moment. This encourages the continual reading of God's Word and encourages one to meditate, reflect on, and pray Scripture.

All of these are helpful possibilities. The important thing is to find an approach that works for you personally, and to commit to using that approach to include daily biblical affirmations in your spiritual life as you seek growth and renewal.

**DECEMBER AFFIRMATIONS**  
**December: A Month of Scriptural Affirmations and Renewal**  
**By Bob Young**

**Week One Introduction**

**Affirmations for Week One--Recognizing Who God Is and What He Is Like**

Today I begin a series of daily affirmations for meditation, prayer, worship, and guiding the Christian life. I invite you to join me in 31 days of scriptural affirmations to deepen our spiritual roots.

Attributes of God: What God is Like (New Testament)

- Sunday: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)
- Monday: God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)
- Tuesday: God (is) the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (1 Tim. 6:15)
- Wednesday: ....who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. (1 Tim. 6:16)
- Thursday: God is spirit, and his worshipers worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)
- Friday: And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- Saturday: And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Cor. 9:8)

**Day 1 Affirmation:** God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

God is light; Jesus said he was the light of the world. He urged his followers to let their light shine. In the Old Testament, Israel was called to be a light to the nations. How can I be light today?

*"God, help me be light; may my light shine in dark places and bring illumination and hope to the places you send me today in this world."*

**Day 2 Affirmation:** God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)

Since God is love and I am called to be like God, can I be love today? To what extent can my love be like God's love?

Is the experience of my living in God and God living in me anything like the oneness Jesus experienced in his time on earth?

The grandeur and splendor of God is beyond us. *"God, help us to understand better and experience more of your loving presence in our lives and in this world. Help us to live in love."*

**Day 3 Affirmation: God is the only Ruler; He is King of kings and Lord of lords.**

Given my limited human perspective, how can I fully know God--light, love, Lord? Given God's presence in my life, why am I tempted to veer on my faith journey? Why am I so easily distracted? Today I am pondering God's great power. Why would I depend on any other power?

*"Dear God, I struggle to understand who you are, and I do not understand why I have so much trouble understanding, but today I ask that you help me keep my eyes on you, contemplating all*

*that it means to enjoy the presence of the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, King above all kings, Lord over all."*

**Day 4: Affirmation--God lives in unapproachable light so that no one has seen him and no one can see him.**

What an incredible thought--a radiance so bright that one cannot look at it, cannot get any closer to it, brighter than the sun. God, totally surrounded by indescribable light, unseen not because he is hidden but because of his splendor and majesty. I want to get closer, but I cannot see how close I am. [Thank you, God, for the presence of your Holy Spirit in my life.]

*"Dear God, strengthen us as we walk by faith. As we walk closer and closer to you, we cannot see, but it is not because of the darkness, but because of the incredible light. Help us be aware of your presence today."*

**Day 5: Affirmation--God is Spirit.**

Jesus is addressing misunderstandings of the Jews and Samaritans--the tendency to measure life in externals. Such an emphasis fails to understand who God is and what God wants. God is Spirit. Jesus uses worship as an illustration--it is not the primary point of the encounter.

Why do we so often stop with worship? God is Spirit so we live in Spirit and truth. It is good to live by truth, but without the Spirit as a part of life, our lives are mere shells of what God has in mind.

God is Spirit. I am a spiritual being--indwelt, led, empowered, strengthened...

*"Dearest Heavenly Father, God of life and inaccessible light, help me today to live as you meant it--walking in the presence of the Spirit, in tune with who you are."*

**Day 6 Affirmation: And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. (1 Cor. 10:13)**

Many more Bible verses declare God's faithfulness. My almost constant challenge is to understand God's faithfulness as relational rather than contractual. A human example might help. The best marital faithfulness does not come from the marriage contract; it arises from a relationship of love. The contract matters, but the love is what makes strong and refreshing the relationship.

*"God, you know that some days are difficult and we can hard shoulder the load. Renew us with an awareness of your firm commitment to us. You have invested so much in us. Where do we get the idea that you are about to give up on us if we do not perfectly toe the line, dotting every "i" and crossing every "t?" Why are we so inclined to fear your faithfulness rather than to celebrate your constant commitment--guiding us, constantly cleansing us, forgiving us, and bringing us home? Today we celebrate your faithfulness and we depend on it, because we can never direct our own footsteps. Strengthen us and make us more and more like you as you bring us home."*

**Day 7 Affirmation: And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Cor. 9:8)**

Sometimes I learn what God is like in unlikely ways and unlikely verses. God's abounding grace is for always in all things. The promise is hard to believe until I grasp the entire picture.

God's desire is that I become like him. He empowers me and makes possible whatever is done. God extends grace to save me, but God also extends abounding grace to give me all I need to follow him, abounding in good work.

*"God of grace, help me see more clearly. Thank you for doing in me and through me what is impossible by mere human efforts. May I never grow weary of reflecting your grace to a grace hungry world. May your grace shine in all I do and say and am. Transform me into your glorious image."*

### **Week Two Introduction**

From a focus on God—light, love, Sovereign, spiritual, gracious, and faithful, we move to affirmations focused on God's past actions. Here is a summary of the suggested affirmations for Week Two, Days 8-14.

Day 8 (Sunday): God's Creation (Psalm 136:5-9)

Day 9 (Monday): God's Deliverance (136:10-14)

Day 10 (Tuesday): God's Protection (136:15-20)

Day 11 (Wednesday): God's Blessings (136:21-22)

Day 12 (Thursday): God's Freedom (136:23-24)

Day 13 (Friday): God's Provision (136:25)

Day 14 (Saturday): My Gratitude (Psalm 136:26)

### **Day 8 Affirmation**

By his understanding he made the heavens, spread out the earth upon the waters, made the great lights—the sun to govern the day, the moon and stars to govern the night. (Ps. 136:5-9) In God's creative genius and power, the Psalmist sees the steadfast love of the Lord, a constant source of wonder and gratitude. This week, I seek to understand God in my life and in my world in terms parallel to those of the Psalmist.

*"Dear God, show me your majesty, awaken in me today the wonder of childhood, the marvel of things I cannot explain, and the simplicity of satisfaction in your presence. Help me see the world around me more clearly, and your presence in creation. Relieve me from the stresses and worries of my limited view, expand each day my vision. Creator Sustainer God, awaken in my rejoicing in your Creation, and your spiritual recreation that brings newness to my journey."*

### **Day 9 Affirmation**

Our God is a delivering God. "He struck down the firstborn of Egypt....and brought Israel out from among them....with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.... he divided the Red Sea in two.... and brought Israel through the midst of it."(Psalm 136:10-14)

Praise God for his deliverance from times of trouble! Many of us have experienced miraculous, unexplainable events in our lives. We and those we love have escaped danger, illness, terminal diseases, and near disasters. I believe God has been at work and has delivered us many times when we have not known it. Our God is an intervening God who still orchestrates the events of our world, even as Daniel affirmed.

*"Lord God, faithful God of your people through the multiplied generations, today I praise you because you have chosen me and made me accepted in your Beloved Son. The deliverance from darkness that you have made possible is only the first in a much longer list of evidences of your*

*delivering, overseeing care. Today give me hope in the midst of whatever comes; today give me courage when I have almost given up on making a difference in the lives of others; today give me encouragement when the task is arduous and those for whom I seek your deliverance are slow to respond to our love."*

**Day 10 Affirmation: We have a powerful, guiding God!**

From Psalm 136:15-20--

He overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea.... He led his people through the wilderness.... He struck down great kings.... He killed mighty kings.... Sihon, king of the Amorites.... and Og, king of Bashan....

The steadfast love of God is evident everywhere about us. What a mighty God we serve! By that power, he guides and sustains us. He intervenes to do what we cannot do for ourselves. He accomplishes the incredible and overcomes the impossible.

*"Dear God, deliver us from our human tendency to do it all, to see only that which is possible with human effort, and to think and dream in small ways about small things. Help us learn the lessons you teach--show us your power and direction anew so that we can live by your power and walk in your ways. Give us pliable hearts to follow your directions even when they do not make sense to us. Work in us and through us your good pleasure, and hear our hearts as we seek your power in our lives."*

**Day 11 Affirmation: We serve a blessing God.**

He gave their land as an inheritance.... an inheritance to his servant Israel. (Psalm 136:21-22). God wants to bless us even as he blessed Israel. All that our Creating, Sustaining, Delivering, Intervening God does, He does to bless us, giving us every good and perfect gift, more and more abounding grace, more than we can ask or think.

*"Dear God, help us rest securely in the heritage of rest you give us in Jesus. We honor your holy name because of your steadfast enduring loving kindness toward us. Take from us our doubts, turn us away from the inordinate desires that the world teaches. Help us walk in the rich inheritance you freely provide, content in your overflowing blessings."*

**Day 12 Affirmation: We serve a liberating God who delivers us into the marvelous freedom of his glorious light.**

"He remembered us in our low estate.... He freed and rescued us from our enemies." (Psalm 136:23-24)

Perhaps the steadfast, enduring loving kindness of God is nowhere seen more clearly than in his desire to love the lowliest, free the frail, and rescue those least capable of repaying his grace and mercy. What a marvelous God we serve; he rescues not because of what he will receive or what we can repay, but because of who he is. He sees, hears, remembers, and enters the human dilemma again and again, always pointing either forward or backward to that time he ultimately, once for all, entered the human predicament to conquer victoriously every foe that besets his beloved human creation. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

*"Dear God, help us believe our rescue; help us to believe your love for us. In our frailty and human tendency to reenter the paths of danger, deliver us daily. Hear our hearts and know and honor our intent to seek you and follow you. Use us mightily according to your purpose, so that*

*our hope might be brighter and our anticipation of glory sweeter. Fill us with an empowering sense of liberty. Teach us the freeing nature of light--how beautiful is the transformation that pure transparency makes possible. Help us be honest with who we are and appreciate the freeing transformation you make possible."*

**Day 13 Affirmation: God always provides!**

"He gives food to all who live.... (Psalm 136:25)

How interesting is this simple affirmation. Concluding a recitation of the events of the Creation and the Exodus delivery of Israel to the bounty and blessing of the Promised Land, a history characterized by the repeated refrain reminding that God's steadfast love endures forever, is this simple statement: God is the one who gives food to all.

Our God is a providing (thus, providential) God, whether we see it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not.

*"Dear God, that we live, that we write and read these words today, that we breathe and move is evidence that you have provided our needs. Help us today to rejoice in the simplicity of little things. Teach us to live in confidence of your provision, praying with expectation and living in vibrant hope of your constant presence and power. Help us remember that sometimes you act in this world through us, and that we are your hands to provide for others. May we see clearly the doors you open."*

**Day 14 Affirmation:** "Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 136:26)

Today I conclude a week of thinking about and celebrating of God's creation, intervening deliverance, powerful guidance, blessings, freedom, and provision. What God did for Israel is no different than what he has always done for his people, what he continues to do, and what he will do. How fitting is the last verse of the psalm: I will give thanks to the God of heaven!

*"Dearest Heavenly Father, I am overwhelmed often with the stories that help me remember who you are and what you have done. Increase my faith so that I confidently expect no less in my own life, developing a faith that guides my prayers and every part of my daily life. Help me to live by faith and not by sight, walking in the Spirit as your child. Today I simply say, 'Thank you,' words that swell from a heart overflowing with gratitude."*

**Days 1-14 Summary**

Today I am near the halfway point in my December affirmations. Looking back on the past fourteen days, I can only praise God as Yahweh Lord: Sovereign Ruler, King of kings and Lord of Lords. He is love and light, dwelling in accessible light beyond our vision and imagination. The God of faithfulness and abounding grace who is himself Spirit wants and has made possible a deep, abiding relationship with his frail, human creation, connecting with our spiritual being, protecting and guiding us.

How long a list of verbal adjectives could we make to describe our God? The affirmations of the last two weeks give only a glimpse of God—creating, sustaining, saving, blessing, guiding, delivering, intervening, providing, promising, liberating....

My heart is filled with gratitude. How can I not give thanks for his unspeakable Gift and gifts? In a season of giving, I want to be like God and little in this life makes me more like him than a

heart of generosity and graciousness. My resolutions for the New Year are being formed—a very good one will be simply to become more like Jesus!

Easily stated but a tremendous challenge as God continues to work in me and through me and with me and on me!

### **Week Three Introduction**

#### **Scriptural Affirmations for Spiritual Growth: December 15-21**

After seven days of affirming God's nature, and seven more days of affirming God's creating and sustaining power, this week's focus will be on response affirmations.

#### **Affirming my Place and Importance in God's Plan (2 Timothy 2)**

- Sunday, Dec 15. We are children—sons and daughters. We are children of God; we are spiritual children of those who have trained us in the faith. We seek to be strong in God's grace, capable of training others who will train others. (2:1-2)
- Monday, Dec 16. We are like soldiers. Soldiers often endure hardship. Soldiers are single-minded and focused on their task; they are not easily distracted. They serve their commander loyally. (2:3-4)
- Tuesday, Dec 17. We are like athletes. We are in a competition and honor and obey the rules. (2:5)
- Wednesday, Dec 18. We are like farmers. Our job is to work in the harvest. We are sowers and reapers. We can expect to receive a reward from that which we produce. (2:6)
- Thursday, Dec 19. We are workers. As workers, we are hired. We seek the approval of God who oversees our work. We seek to be diligent workers; we want to be skilled workers. (2:15)
- Friday, Dec 20. We are vessels--instruments or tools. Not every vessel is noble, but we can be noble instruments for God through the pure lives we live. God's purpose for us is noble. When we place ourselves in his hands, we are useful in very good work. (2:20-21)
- Saturday, Dec. 21. We are servants. As servants, we live a certain kind of life and develop certain kinds of skills. It is not enough merely to commit ourselves to serving. We are called to peaceful living, kindness, skilled teaching, and gentleness. We serve because we genuinely care for others. (2:24-26).

#### **Day 15 Affirmation: I am a child of the King; I will live as a child of the King.**

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

What a privilege! Some days the thought overwhelms me. I am a child of the God whose grandeur and magnificence is beyond description. I have been given his nature, have received his blessing; I have been chosen by him. The Bible affirms it again and again: we Christians are children—sons and daughters of God. Not only are we children of God; we are spiritual children of those who have shared with us and trained us in the faith. Living like a child of the King means many things, but today my commitment is to seek to be strong in God's grace and to commit myself to training others who will train others.

*“Dear God, help me live boldly and faithfully as your child. Thank you for all you have done and are doing in my life. Help me to depend on you and not on myself and my own efforts. Today I*

*recommit myself to a life of worshipful praise, reflecting your strength and grace and investing myself in the lives of others so that the Kingdom message continues to flow from Zion to the ends of the earth. Give me wisdom as I seek to encourage and train those who will pass the message forward."*

**Day 16 Affirmation: I am willing to endure hardship because I am a soldier of the King.**

"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

The comparison is not as well known today as it was in the first century. As I think about my place in God's kingdom work today, the Bible says I am like a soldier. Soldiers often endure hardship; theirs is not a life of ease. Their first allegiance is to the leader and their fellow-soldiers. Soldiers are single-minded and focused on their task; they are not easily distracted. They serve their commander loyally. It is not sufficient to enlist; the soldier who is commended does the job, opposing the enemy, planting new hope and new possibilities among those who were formerly oppressed.

*"Dear God, take from me the tendency to avoid difficulties; give me boldness and courage for the sake of the cause of the gospel. It seems natural to seek an easy life. Remind me that you call me to the yielded life—regardless of where that may lead me. I am grateful for the promise of your presence at my side so that I have nothing to fear. Show me my weaknesses, not to discourage me but to help me know that the power is not in me but is of Christ. Thank you for calling me and empowering me to overcome victoriously."*

**Day 17 Affirmation: I want to run the race like a well-trained athlete.**

An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2:5)

The illustration of the athlete is better known in the world today than that of the soldier, but it is no more easily lived out. Excellent athletes are few and far between. Why? A competitive athlete is constantly training. Athletes develop skills that become a part of their nature.

Athletes can act without thinking, doing what comes naturally. The picture of a Christian who naturally lives out and shares the gospel provides a worthy goal. Another illustration is the Christian who naturally responds with the Spirit of Jesus when confronted or criticized. Good athletes live by the rules as they train and as they compete. Christians are like athletes. We are called to training, to run the race, to finish the course, and to live according to the rules.

*"Dear God, help me learn to live the Christian life naturally, imitating Jesus, teaching, preaching, and healing. Bless my efforts to learn your ways and to walk your path; lead me and strengthen me when I falter. Help me bring glory to your name as I run the race."*

**Day 18 Affirmation: I will be a kingdom worker who faithfully sows and reaps.**

"It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops." (2 Timothy 2:6)

Jesus did say, did he not, that we should pray for workers for the harvest? Kingdom work is like sowing and harvesting. Paul echoes Jesus' words as he describes the Christian life. The life and work of a Christian can be compared to that of a farmer. It is interesting that the illustrations Paul uses are not well-known in today's U.S. society. I remember days on the farm when my family would visit Grandma: up at 4:00 A.M. to milk the cows, run the milk route to deliver milk to town, back to the farm for gardening, haying, on and on...from before sunup to sundown or

after.

Christians are harvest workers. Many of Jesus' parables focus on seeds and weeds and results. Sometimes we Christians are sowers, sometimes we are reapers; sometimes we are blessed to be both. We can expect to receive a reward from that which is reaped. When we read Jesus' words or the words of Paul in today's text, it is hard to imagine a Christian who never plants, never waters, and never harvests the increase God gives.

*"Dear God, help me to keep my basket filled with good seed so I can spread it everywhere, but especially when I see good ground. Give me wisdom as I try to nurture and tend. Restore to me the joy of the harvest, so that I will go forth again and again into the harvest. Help me overcome my fears; give me boldness; place on my heart the things that are dear to your heart. Remind me that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, that he gave himself a ransom for all."*

**Day 19 Affirmation: I will be involved in the kingdom as a diligent worker.**

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

I hope we have not missed the point: we Christians are called to be workers. We seek the approval of God who oversees our work. "Do your best" suggests that we should be diligent workers. In today's text I see a challenge to be a skilled worker. Forget for a moment the ongoing struggle to understand the exact relationship between our actions and our right-standing before God. Focus rather on the reality that we Christians are called to be actively involved in God's purpose in this world.

*"Dear God, forgive my tendency to receive without giving. I know I learned that attitude from the world and not from you. Renew my commitment. I want to do your will and be approved. Help me today to act in such a way that you receive all the glory, and that I can pillow my heart in full assurance of my heart's focus and your gracious acceptance and approval. Help me be a worker who sees what needs to be done and does it without hesitation. Help me handle your word with compassion and not for control. Today make me more like the Master who urged his followers to recognize that night comes and that one must work while it is yet day."*

**Day 20 Affirmation: I will be a holy, set apart instrument for God, capable of making a difference in God's work.**

"Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work." (2 Timothy 2:20-21)

We are vessels or instruments of God. Vessels have different values based on their nature; vessels have different values based on their usefulness. Every Christian can be a noble instrument for God through purity of life. God's purpose for his creation is noble. When we place ourselves in his hands, we are useful in every good work.

*"Dear God, create in me a clean heart, renew in me a right spirit through the presence of your Holy Spirit. Cleanse me from every evil thought and desire. I yield myself to you as an instrument of righteousness, willingly enslaving myself to righteousness--obedient and ready. Use me I pray."*

### **Day 21 Affirmation: I will be a faithful servant.**

"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness...." (2 Timothy 2:24-25a)

We are servants. As servants, we live a certain kind of life and develop certain kinds of skills. It is not enough merely to commit ourselves to serving. We are called also to peaceful living, kindness, skilled teaching, patient endurance and gentleness. We serve because we genuinely care for others.

*"Dear God, I have made a lot of commitments to you this week, but you totally deserve of all the admiration and glory my heart can muster. I stand in awe in your presence, also in awe that you want me and accept me as your child. I affirm that I want to be your soldier, disciplined like an athlete; I want to be involved in planting and harvesting; I want to be a committed, diligent, skilled worker; a holy instrument and obedient servant. Thank you for doing through me what I cannot do by my own power. I confidently affirm that because you have called me to your eternal glory, you will also continue to restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish me."*

### **Part Four Introduction**

For the last 10 days of the month, I will share 20 "blessing" passages from the Psalms, two affirmations each day. (Citations are from the ESV.)

People of character are blessed by God in their walk with Him.

### **Day 22 Affirmations**

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (1:1-2)

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (2:12b)

*"Dear God, teach me today two things--to delight in your word so that I walk faithfully in your ways, and to place ultimate trust and confidence in you as my strong refuge in the storms of life in this world."*

### **Day 23 Affirmation--Blessings from the Psalms (ESV)**

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (32:1-2)

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! (33:12)

*"Dearest Father, this morning I thank you again for Jesus who made possible the forgiveness of transgression and covering of sin. You have more than done your part in not counting my iniquities. Guide me today as I seek to walk away from deceitful ways; show me the beauty of the transparent life. I pray for our nation because it looks to me like we are less and less a nation that recognizes you, O LORD, as God."*

### **Day 24 Affirmation: More Blessings from the Psalms (ESV)**

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! (34:8)

Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! (40:4)

*"Dear God, trust is hard for me. Independence seems better, making my own way, looking back on my accomplishments with pride, listening to and accepting and living out the lies of human society. Today help me remember that untruths lead me astray always. Help me see your goodness in everything about me. I want to dwell under your protective wings; I want to walk in your protective presence."*

**Day 25 Affirmations: Blessings from the Psalms (ESV)**

Even on holidays, my day begins with God. May you have a blessed day in your walk with him. Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. (41:1-2)

Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple! (65:4)

*"Dear Heavenly Father and LORD Yahweh, today many will give and receive gifts and enjoy materials things, help me remember that you bless, deliver and protect the one who considers the plight of the poor. In celebrating abundance, may I find my ultimate satisfaction in being near to you, rejoicing in the goodness of your presence and the holiness of your indwelling. Help me draw nearer to you today."*

**Day 26 Affirmation: #9 and #10 of 20 blessings from the Psalms (ESV)**

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you! (84:4,5,12)

Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face, who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted. (89:15-16)

*"God and Father of multiplied blessings, today I acknowledge your glory and power, confidently depending on you as I journey to the eternal Zion. Teach me to trust totally, to rejoice in your righteousness and to exult in your exaltation. May I learn to love more and more the singing of your praise and to seek your presence. Teach me your ways, establish firm my life as I seek to bring you glory."*

**Day 27 Affirmations: More blessing passages from the Psalms (ESV), great promises but also great challenges!**

Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law... (94:12)

Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times! (106:3)

*"Dear God, thank you for your word, thank you for teaching me from it so that I can become a well disciplined learner-disciple. I do not usually think of discipline as a joy, so help me to learn this day the joy of the faithful walk in the midst of the siren songs of society. May I rejoice in righteousness and justice. Give me a portion of your heart and your desire to correct injustice. Honor my commitment to righteousness with your guiding Holy Spirit."*

**Day 28 Affirmation: Blessings passages from the Psalms (ESV)**

How can I not praise God? Why would I not revere him and seek his way? He hears and

remembers and has compassion on those who put their trust in him. He will bless.  
Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! (112:1)

You, who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us.... (115:11-12a)

*"Dearest God and Father, may there be nothing dearer in my life today than your will and way. May it be my first thought upon arising and my last thought as I pillow my head. May it be the priority of my heart, so that from the abundance of the delights of my heart will flow forth and be evident to all my trust, my love, my desire for your glory. Be to me help and shield on the journey. Thank you for every blessing, especially those I have not even seen or recognized."*

### **Day 29 Affirmations for Spiritual Renewal and Growth**

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! (Psalm 119:1-3, ESV)

Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them [children]! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:5, ESV)

*"Dear God, it is difficult to understand how one can walk blamelessly, doing no wrong. Strengthen me today in the weak places. Deliver me from excuse-making. Instill in me a greater love for your Holy Word, a desire to seek you and know you whole-heartedly. As I receive blessings from your hand, may my life in turn be a blessing to others. Open my eyes and show me the opportunities and the path to influence and to bless others."*

### **Day 30 Affirmations: Two More Blessing Passages from the Psalms ESV**

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! (128:1)

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD. (128:4)

*"Dear God, restore to me today the wonder of the beautiful things you make possible in my life. Help me seek your ways; teach me your ways, show me your heart in fresh ways so that my walk with you is more and more a natural part of who I am and how I live and love. I have no doubt that you want to bless your creation. May I be a blessing to those about me even as you bless me."*

### **Day 31 Affirmations: Blessings #19 and #20 from the Psalms (ESV)**

Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD! (144:15)

Blessed is he, whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God.... (146:5)

*"Dear YHWH God, there is no god like you in earth or heaven above. You hear the hurts of my heart and the sighs of my soul, you remember your covenant of love, you see your people, and you know. In the midst of the multiplied gods of this world, keep my eyes firmly set on you so I will rejoice when I say that you are my LORD! I see in you my help because you are ever-present in my daily life; I see in you my hope. I cannot explain how you are present and transcendent at once, but I rest confidently and faithfully in your faithfulness through multiplied generations. Open my heart, my eyes, my ears so that I can see more clearly."*